

Oklahoma, as of this spring when they implemented that plan, had the second highest divorce rate in the country. Governor Keating and his wife have carried the messages of the consequences of divorce, especially when children are involved, to towns throughout Oklahoma.

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They have involved seven sectors of Oklahoma life: business, church, education, service providers, government, legal and media. Three of the four things we in the House put in welfare reform regarding TANF that had to do with marriage and family. What is unusual about this Oklahoma program, because every State is bragging about how they have reduced welfare rolls, how they have gotten people back to work and the things they have done with the family, is that it is a comprehensive program to marriage and family issues. I want to read this, and then I will insert the full remarks into the RECORD.

"Community Covenants, (religious leaders join other sector leaders in community-based solutions to reduce the divorce rate.)

"Scholar-in-residence: Oklahoma State University (national marriage expert);

"Ongoing activities to keep marriage/divorce on the public agenda;

"Statewide training/service delivery system (working with the Nation's experts to develop this system/curriculum that will provide research-based skills training);

"Marriage Resource Center (information, mentorship, et cetera);

"Research/Evaluation (in consultation with Oklahoma State University and the Nation's best marital research experts);

"Improvement of our data system (to understand more about our divorce rate and where to focus our resources);

"Second Annual Governor and First Lady's Conference on Marriage;

"Fatherhood Projects (integration of fatherhood project into the marriage initiative);

"Mother Mentoring/Children First (integration of motherhood projects into the marriage initiative);

"Support of other coalitions/services (pilot demonstration projects that will strengthen couple relationships/marriage and high-risk, vulnerable populations);

"Media (tools for influencing and changing the culture; putting issues on the public agenda);

"Charitable Choice liaison to head the State's efforts to partner with charitable and faith-based organizations to providing and delivering social services;

"Youth Education/Prevention Programs (changing the attitudes of young people who are yet to personally confront the issues of marriage/divorce)."

Mr. Speaker, this is a comprehensive way to try to tackle what people say is something that cannot be done. Con-

stantly here, when we hear about social problems, oh, well, problems of moral issues like teen pregnancy and divorce cannot really be dealt with by the Government. Now, here is a whole series of things that they are implementing through the course of this year in Oklahoma to try to tackle what is fundamentally one of the major problems we have in the United States when we look at teen runaways, teen suicide, child abuse. We see family breakdown at the core of this. We need innovative leaders who are willing to take some risks to experiment. Not all of these programs will work. Some of them will take longer to get started, but to look at comprehensive ways to address this.

In conclusion, what I want to point out is that compassionate conservatism is not just talk. We have governors like Frank Keating and Governor George W. Bush, who have actually implemented innovative ideas. Former Mayor Goldsmith of Indianapolis led the way at the city level. Here in the House, Members like the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. TALENT) and the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. WATTS) and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KASICH) and the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PITTS) and others; and in the Senate, Senator BROWNBACK, Senator SANTORUM, Senator ABRAHAM. We have innovative leaders throughout this country who have been, will be, and currently are working to try to implement creative ways from a conservative perspective to address these difficult social problems.

GOVERNOR FRANK KEATING CHALLENGES NATION TO TACKLE DIVORCE RATE

OKLAHOMA COMMITS \$10 MILLION TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEM

WASHINGTON, DC.—Governor Frank Keating is increasing Oklahoma's stakes in the battle to reduce its divorce rate by making a significant financial commitment to address the problem. Jerry Regier, Oklahoma Cabinet Secretary for Health and Human Services, was in Washington, DC today to announce that Governor Keating is now the first governor in the country to set aside \$10 million dollars in TANF (Temporary Assistance For Needy Families) funds to be used to strengthen marriages and reduce the divorce rates.

Oklahoma has led the nation in this arena since last year when Governor Keating announced that his state was committed to doing something to reverse the fact that Oklahoma has the 2nd highest divorce rate in the country. In both his Inaugural address and his State of the State address, Keating laid out the goal of reducing the state's divorce rate by 1/3 by 2010.

Through this past year, the Governor and First Lady Cathy Keating have carried the message of the consequences of divorce, especially when children are involved, to towns throughout Oklahoma. They have developed the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative into something unique, taking a bold step forward with each new idea. They have involved leaders from seven sectors of Oklahoma life: business, church, education, service providers, government, legal, and the media.

"When we launched this initiative, frankly some people asked Cathy and me what business the government has getting involved in

marriage," says Governor Frank Keating. "But when you look at the consequences of divorce, the better question is 'What business do we have not getting involved?'"

"Divorce has staggering negative effects, both economically and socially. We cannot continue to ignore its impact. While we have turned our state's focus and attention to reducing divorce, we must now add our resources and greater action," says Keating.

TANF funds are block grant funds provided to each state and marriage is a key component of three of the four goals for that funding:

(1) "To provide assistance to needy families so that the children may be cared for in their homes or in the homes of relatives."

(2) "To end dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work and marriage . . ."

(3) "To prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies."

(4) "To encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families."

On Monday of this week, Governor Keating sent a letter to the Department of Human Services board of directors officially asking them to set aside the TANF funds. Regier and DHS Director Howard Hendrick have been meeting for months, at Keating's direction, to finalize the budget allocation and an agreement was reached late last week. Regier heads the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative for Governor and Mrs. Keating and is charged with the task of developing and implementing an effective strategy to reduce the divorce rate.

"It's with great privilege that I announce today that Oklahoma is the first state to set aside a significant amount of money for reducing its divorce rate and strengthening marriages. While other states have similar TANF resources to invest in meeting this important goal, under the leadership of Governor Keating, Oklahoma is the first to take this important step by committing \$10 million to achieve these goals," says Regier.

Even before this funding commitment, Oklahoma has already begun making important changes. During 1999, the Department of Human Services began calculating the incomes of both individuals in a cohabiting (unmarried) couple when determining assistance eligibility. No longer is there a financial incentive for couples to live together outside of marriage.

Over the coming months, Oklahoma will continue to finalize its action plan. The major components will include:

Community Covenants (religious leaders join other sector leaders in community-based solutions to reduce the divorce rate)

Scholar-in-Residence: Oklahoma State University (national marriage expert)

On-going activities to keep marriage/divorce on the public agenda

Statewide training/service delivery system (working with the nation's experts to develop this system/curriculum that will provide research-based skills training)

Marriage Resource Center (information, mentorship, etc.)

Research/Evaluation (in consultation with OSU and the nation's best marital research experts)

Improvement of our data system (to understand more about our divorce rate and where to focus our resources)

Second Annual Governor and First Lady's Conference on Marriage

Fatherhood Projects (integration of fatherhood projects into the marriage initiative)

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